



RECIDIVISM: OUR PRIMARY MEASURE OF SUCCESS

BY ELIZABETH K. DRAKE

For many years, the Planning and Research Section has run a series of Recidivism Briefing Papers to present recidivism rates on various demographics. Our most recent Briefing Paper, No. 21, has been posted on the intranet. You can find it at <http://doc-wb3/usercontents/Research/PlanningResearch/studies.htm> or contact Planning and Research at (360) 753-6180. The purpose of the paper was to revisit the basics of what recidivism is and how the Department of Correction measures it, specifically, by looking at offense type. The following is a summary of the Briefing Paper.

Recidivism is defined as an offender's return to a Washington State adult correctional facility resulting from a new felony conviction or parole violation by an offender who has either been discharged or paroled from such a facility. Recidivism is measured within five years of the offender's release from prison. Offenders released from prison between 1985 and 1998 are included in the analysis of the Briefing Paper.

The overall recidivism rate for the State of Washington is 32.3 percent. This means that on average, nearly 3 out of 10 offenders return to prison within five years of release.



In comparison to previous analyses, recidivism rates by offense type have remained stable. Property offenders still recidivate at the highest rate (45.6 percent) and sex offenders recidivate at the lowest rate (17.2 percent) with person (31.6 percent) and drug offenders (26.6 percent) in between.

When broken down by gender, recidivism rates by each offense type are quite different. Males have a higher return to prison rate, 33.1 percent within five years, compared to 23.5 percent of females. Property offenders have the highest rates for both sexes. Drug offenders have the second highest recidivism rate for females, but person offenders have the second highest recidivism rate for males.

For offenders who do return to prison, it is important to know how quickly they become re-incarcerated because at-risk time has policy implications on how long offenders should be supervised in the community. Property offenders return more quickly than all other offense types. Thirty-six percent of all property offenders who return to prison do so in the first year. Sixty-five percent who come back have returned within the first two years. There is not much difference in the timing of return between drug and sex offenders.

Offenders who come back to prison tend to be convicted of the same general offense category as their release offense category. Over 65 percent of property, drug and sex offenders who recidivate are convicted for the same offense type.



FOR YOUR INFORMATION..

BOOK/PUBLICATION OF THE MONTH

"Recidivism: Tracking, Methodology and Reporting" in Corrections Compendium, Vol. 27, n 11. The article looks at definitions and tracking methods across 47 states. Contact Planning & Research for a copy.

WEB SITE OF THE MONTH

<http://justiceconcepts.com/recidivism.htm>

Keep in mind these three concepts when discussing or measuring recidivism.

DEFINITION OF THE MONTH

Recidivism: An offender's return to a Washington State adult correctional facility resulting from a new felony conviction or parole violation by an offender who has either been discharged or paroled from such a facility.

DOC MONTHLY STATISTICS AS OF APRIL 30, 2004

CONFINEMENT POPULATION

Total Confinement	15,891
Work Release	687
Out of State Rented Beds	231

COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS POPULATION

ACTIVE SUPERVISION	39,282
RMA	7,843
RMB	6,756
RMC	3,580
RMD	12,269
Unclassified	2,491
MONETARY	6,343
INACTIVE STATUS	16,665

ESCAPES FROM SECURITY LEVELS 2-5, FOR FY04

	Date	Type	Return
Stafford Creek	08/29/03	Facility	08/29/03
Ahtanum View	09/01/03	Facility	09/08/03
Tacoma PR	10/29/03	Off-Site	12/16/03
MCC -Twin Rivers	11/01/03	Facility	11/09/03
Olympic	12/13/03	Facility	12/14/03
Pine Lodge PR	12/24/03	Facility	12/24/03
Airway Heights	01/04/04	Facility	01/04/04
MCC-WSR-Min	03/17/04	Facility	03/17/04
Tacoma PR	03/22/04	Facility	03/31/04
Airway Heights	03/30/04	Work Crew	-----

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Person offenders are the least likely to be convicted of the same offense type.

Offenders whose reconviction offense is the same type as their release offense recidivate more quickly compared to offenders whose reconviction offense differs from their original offense. Thirty-three percent of offenders who committed the same offense type were back within one year compared to 26 percent of offenders who had a different reconviction offense than their original offense.